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LICHEE NUTS

Acknowledgment is made to the American Mercury in the issue of which of January 1925 seven of these Lichee Nuts were published, and six in the issue of June 1925.

LICHEE NUTS

by EDGAR LEE MASTERS

HORACE LIVERIGHT
NEW YORK

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PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

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ASCETICS AND DRUNKARDS

YESTERDAY Yang Chung was talking of ascetics and
drunkards,
And arguing that ascetics live as fully as drunkards.
"Denial," said Yang Chung, "has as much sensation
As indulgence."

EDAES

YANG CHUNG IN OLD AGE

My friend Yang Chung is a very old man,
Gray and bent, wrinkled, without teeth.
He talks of his boyhood when he made sand pagodas,
And flew kites and sailed the river.
He talks of his days of business,
When he bought and sold and grew rich.
He talks of his later days, and the present days
When for something to do he buys and sells.
"All the same thing," said Yang Chung.
"First play things, then real things: business and money.
Then growing old, then old, and all life old.
Then business and money becoming playthings.
First playthings, then business,
Then business become a plaything."

CITY HALL PARK

Calm evening over the thousands of houses,
The millions of houses;
And a sky gold-dusted to the tip of the Woolworth
tower.
One star dodging the folds of a fluttering flag,
As the butterfly eludes the net.
And the thin white jade of a moon,
Tossed up by the sea.
My heart wanders beyond houses to meadows
Where the eye can look as far as the heart longs.

MOBILIZATION DAY

Food and coal will cost much this winter,
And many will be out of work and begging,
And I must labor very much.
Today when the soldiers were marching
I met a girl of seventeen in Twenty-third street.
Her eyes were beaded, her lips cerised,
Her white stockings showed to her knees,
She carried a purse and a parasol,
She looked at the soldiers and smiled.
If she had had enough sense she would have been thinking:
"I shall never bear a son."

LI CHIEN GETS DRUNK

Li Chien and I were drunk yesterday,
And he began to berate the tiger and the dragon.
"It may be bad to be born," he said,
"And bad to die;
And sickness and poverty along the way are bad;
But there is something worse than any of these,
Since they heap up the cruelties of Nature,
Which is blind, while these things come from eyes,
Being the dishonors and injustices done to us by men,
Look how I was dishonored by Shen Gow;
And how I was robbed by Sung Wu.
Now there is the devil who turns the forgetfulness of
wine
Into remembrance."

THE BRONX ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN

VERY large python at the Bronx,
With eyes like yellow buttons on a tan shoe;
And a mouth white and pink like the inside of a conch
shell.
Last night I dreamed of this python:
A lady dressed in red was feeding him with white
doves,
Which he swallowed as the sea swallows flakes of
snow.
"You are feeding him too much," I said to the lady.
"No," she replied,
"His name is War, and these doves are the souls of
youths."

FIFTH AVENUE

In the sunshine of middle September
On Fifth Avenue,
The ladies, numerous as cherry blossoms,
Bright as peacocks and flamingoes
Pace along in never ending files —
Leases will expire on the last day of September.

MUSIC IN MEMORY

Music in memory, sweeter than music
Played on the strings, comes to me;
Pulls down my heart, and my heart is fainting:
Too much longing, what is it about?
Music in memory, and I see Hsi-Chün
Climbing beside me, up the high rocks;
See Hsi-Chün standing beside me
On the high rocks, looking at the sea.
Gulls skim the water, bell-buoy is ringing,
Great ship is sailing, China far off.
Music in memory, why do I hear it,
And didn't hear it with Hsi-Chün?
Now I know that this is her music,
The same as this music inside my ear;
Now I know that she is this music
Because as I hear it I see Hsi-Chün.
But my heart grows faint, my breast is hurting
For hearing this music I never heard,
And didn't know, as I climbed the high rocks
Talking nothings with Hsi-Chün.

SALVATION ARMY GIRL

This morning Salvation Army girl come
And say: Pray and get what you want,
Ask and receive.
This afternoon Irishman digging up water main
Say God damn, and say Ireland pray to God
For more'n hundred year for freedom,
And get it in neck all time.
Chinaman has better way:
No give a damn.

WING LEE AND QUEENIE HARVEY

Chinese friend Wing Lee
Have very happy time with American girl,
Queenie Harvey,
And give her two pair silk stockings;
Then find out that Queenie Harvey exchange
Two pair silk stockings
For three pair silk and lisle,
And so have two left
After sending one pair to sister,
Missionary in China. . . .
Confucius no teach like this —
Not polite.

HE CONVERT

FRIEND in China write me letter of great missionary
Who convert many Chinese people,
And say if they believe they can eat poison,
And handle serpents, as written in Holy Scripture.
Chan Chou accept Jesus, and is baptized,
Then handle cobra to prove he believe.
Cobra bite Chan Chou, and he die.
Missionary say Chan Chou die because he do not
believe;
I say he believe or would not handle cobra.

ON CONTENTMENT

First wife dead, second wife gone to China.
No children, no house, only this little room,
This stove, couch, bowl and spoon and image of
Buddha.
But a little silver laid away, and food enough;
Mind at rest, or filled with good thoughts,
And long talks with Yang Chung every day.

THE PEACH BLOSSOM RIVER

I WOULD lose myself, said Yet Wei,
Walking by the shore of the Peach Blossom River
Which flows to the good land, T'ao-yüan.
I would find the mouth of the cave by the river,
And enter thereby into the wide and beautiful country
Of good people.
I would learn their old tongue, spoken no more;
And read their books now despised, or long lost;
I would be happy where there are no laws,
Where everyone owns a piece of land;
And I would find me a house by a lake
In view of mountains pale as breath,
Under a great pine tree.
I would all this again.
For I found the cave in my youth,
And wandered into this peaceful country.
Thinking I could return to it,
I came back to tell my people where it was,
And to come.

They heard me and came, following me as guide —
But I could never find the cave again.
My people pulled me this way and that;
They talked in loud voices, and pointed this way,
And the other way;
And many deserted me, and went in different directions.
I wandered on quite lost at last —
I could never find the cave again.

LAO-TZE AND HIS COW

A PRIEST from the Church of the Transfiguration
Was telling Yet Wei, Hip Lung,
Luck Ho Ho, Tuck High,
And some others, about Jesus
Taking Peter and James and John
Into a high mountain, where his garments became glistering,
Where his face shone as the sun,
And where Moses and Elijah appeared,
And God talked.
What did God say? asked Luck Ho Ho.
The priest replied:
God said, This is my son, hear ye him.
Then Yet Wei, Hip Lung,
Luck Ho Ho and Tuck High
Began to talk all together in Chinese,
And to laugh.
They were telling about Lao-tze
Who knew that mankind would not accept his teaching,

And so rode away on a cow,
And disappeared in the desert —
But not until he had been held long enough at the wall
To get his complete doctrine.

TUCK HIGH HAS A SON

Tuck High complained of his arms and back,
Saying that his wife had almost pulled him apart
By clinging to him, and bracing herself against him
In the last throes of her delivery.
That's nothing, said Hip Lung:
All your married life
You have been pulling against her,
And you have both stood up and had your way by
doing so;
She has drawn you to her, and you have resisted,
And thus become something other than you would
have become;
You have found and expressed yourself
By standing apart from her.
Otherwise you would not have been what you are —
Otherwise you might have been nothing,
Like a tree standing alone, which dies,
And cannot be bent into works of art.

Horace Delancy, good man,
Know some books, know city and men,
Come into shop of Hip Lung very much
To talk about many things.
One day he said Great War had ruined America.
He said Great War had broken, embittered,
Fouled America, and had destroyed Liberty.
Harry Chin, Hong King, Hop Lee
Said nothing.
By and by Hip Lung said:
What do you think of China people
Who remained the same in spite of Tartars,
And many emperors?
What do you think of Chou that last 800 years?
Of Han that last 400 years?
Of T'Ang that last 200 years,
Of Manchu that last 260 years?
And all the while war, pestilence and famine;
But all the while carved jade, temples, cities, poems?

America is little boy yet.
What America needs is to lose war,
To have great humiliation —
More than once.

A VISIT TO THE SEA

Joslin Murdoch, an actor no more could act.
And all at once no woman would notice him;
So he looked in the mirror and saw his gray temples.
Then he went far out on Long Island
To live in a shack by the sea,
Gathering drift wood for his stove;
Cooking his own meals,
And walking the shore;
Or else sitting on the porch to watch the gulls.
Yet Wei knew Joslin Murdoch
From the old days in Chinatown.
When Yet Wei heard where the actor had gone
He went to see him with lichee nuts in his pockets,
With rice, with a chicken, with Chinese tobacco and
some wine.
Tears stood in the eyes of Joslin Murdoch
When he saw Yet Wei.
Then they both laughed.
Then they went about the shore gathering drift wood.

They cooked the meal together, and ate it.
Then Joslin Murdoch fell asleep
To the sound of the sea wind
Whining at the windows,
And flapping a loose screen door.
Yet Wei sat looking at Joslin Murdoch
Until he awoke.

AT THE BATTERY

When Yet Wei told Harry Chin
About going to sea shore
Where Joslin Murdoch lived,
Harry Chin had dreams about his village in China
By the river of lotuses and cranes,
Amid the hills over which the crows flew,
Close to the little farms of fields and meadows
Full of singing birds, where the cuckoo called.
He dreamed of springs of the blossoming pear;
Of the sun rising over the river;
Of the moon casting the shadows of willows on the
valley road.
So Harry Chin went down to the Battery;
He stood on the pier to hear the sea water
Lap the stones around the piles,
And to see the evening clouds over New Jersey.
How could he take his troubled heart
Back to troubled China?
I have lost the kingdom of my life,

Said Harry Chin to the sea.
I am like the Emperor Wang who was dethroned,
Who died and became a cuckoo,
Fated to call forever,
"Oh, to go back again."

When the gates of the Jade Pass have fallen,
And the Yellow River has dried,
And the Blue River has become a dusty road.
When the Five Holy Mountains lie level with the valleys,
And Chang-fêng-sha, the Wind Swept Sands,
Are still where no air stirs;
When the winds have ceased, and the rain is gone forever,
And all the stars go out;
And the moon slips into the dark void,
And is lost,
As a lotus petal falls into the crevice of the rocks,
And disappears;
When all these things have happened, China will be no more!
England had relapsed into barbarism
When China had tea and printing,
And carved jade,

And beautiful painting which revealed the accomplished soul.
When Europe was taken by the weeds
Of rites and superstitions, candles and virgin worship,
And by the lusts of John, Sisinnius and Paul,
And by the madness of St. Augustine,
Tu Fu and Li Po wrote eternal poems
Of friendship, of love, of separation and reunion,
Of flowers and the seasons, of moons on the water,
Of the peace of beauty in hearts at one with nature.

HÜEN SHA

Elmer Chubb asked Hip Lung
Thousands of questions about China's religion:
If the Buddhist priests preached
From what books did they preach?
If they preached good morals what did they say?
If they preached salvation
What kind of salvation was it,
And through whom was salvation to be won?
Hip Lung grew very tired of Elmer Chubb,
And one day he tried to answer all questions
By telling of Hüen Sha, a Buddhist sage.
Hüen Sha, said Hip Lung,
Stood before the congregation one day
About to start his sermon,
When a bird outdoors began to sing.
Hüen Sha descended from the pulpit, saying,
The sermon has been preached. . . .
Elmer Chubb clicked his tongue and stared;
Finally he said: There is nothing in that,

Nothing that saves a soul, or gives a country progress.
Well, replied Hip Lung, if you see nothing in it,
You might let people alone
Who know what it means.

OSBORN DEWEY went to Taos, New Mexico.
He climbed the ladders of the terraced houses,
And listened to the voices of the Indians
Talking among themselves, when they did not know
That anyone was listening.
He made records of their voices.
Then he came back to New York
And told Hip Lung that the guttural rise and fall
Of the Chinese and Indian voices were alike,
And that he felt surer than ever
That America was first peopled from China.
Yes, said Hip Lung;
And when America is as old as the Shang dynasty
China thought will rule America.

LETTER FROM PEKING

When your letter came I went to the willow bordered canal,
And read it over again, with no hate in my heart.
The peace and the indifference of China have changed me.
I am not what I was when I lived in Chicago,
And before that at Indian Point by Blue Lake, in Illinois.
I have grown to dislike Christianity;
I am now a Confucian, or Taoist, or Buddhist.

Memories come back to me!
I was ten years old when my father disappeared
Leaving my mother and me in want.
Before that he was always busy and silent.
He rose early and went to his factory;
He ate with us, not speaking;
He sat late at night over his calculus.

On Sundays he painted pictures, he was always busy
or dreaming.
Then there was the first day he walked on crutches
From locomotor, and that was the day, too, his factory
burned.
Soon after that he disappeared—no farewell to me,
to mother.
Today to hear of his death, after twenty years,
Brings back all these things.
To hear that he was a fisherman at last
On the Gulf of Mexico, hurts my heart;
For I can imagine him hobbling about his boats.

Those were happy days in Illinois.
He loved us I am sure; I cannot understand why he
deserted us.
Once he took us to Blue Lake; I was about eight years
old.
I remember the hills across the lake, the soft wind,
The chorus of the frogs, and the waves of the lake
Which made saucers of nephrite of the moon.
He laughed very much that day, and when we started
home
He picked me up and kissed me; he kissed mother,
too.

He was singing as we drove home. Did he really love us?
If he loved us why did he run away?

Mother being dead now so long, yours is the first letter
I have had in years from Illinois.
She cried bitterly when I came to China to work in the Mission House —
There is something of my father in me, a wanderer.
If she could see me now as Mrs. Yen — and these dolls,
This black-eyed brood of mine.
I saw Yen in his shop several times during my first weeks in Peking.
One day I saw him at the Grand Canal where I was watching the white ducks;
And once by Harmony Gate, and then in his shop where he gave me a Buddha.
Later he gave me some blue velvet with raised peonies and butterflies.
After we were married I helped him keep the shop
Where we sell amber and crystal and coral,
Bronzes and lacquer work and vases of turquoise to English and Americans.
We have tea together at the finest tea rooms, and sometimes I go with Yen

To the East Gate where he flies his kite—he is very
kind to me.
I have written this by the willow bordered canal.
If there be any in the home town who remembers me
Tell them that I am well.

HOLY LANDS

THERE was talk at Hip Lung's
About the Arabs killing the Jews
At Jerusalem; for it was the day
That thousands of Jews marched through the streets
Protesting because Britain did not protect Jerusalem,
And calling upon America to defend the Holy Land.
Well, says Yet Wei, who ever care anything
For Shantung, Holy Land of China,
Birthplace of Confucius — who ever care?
Thirty years ago Germany stole a part of Shantung.
Did anyone send troops?
Yes, Russia sent troops and stole Liao-tung.
Did anyone else send troops?
Yes, Britain sent troops and stole Wei-hai-wei.
Did anyone else send troops?
Yes, America sent troops to Peking,
And then set up a Federal Court in Shanghai.
Then America entered World War for democracy,
And after all is over let Japan steal Kiai-Chau in
Shantung.

Well, says Hip Lung, China lost Shantung land,
And America lost her republic;
Japan gets China's wealth;
Confucius keeps China's hearts.

YET WEI AT THE THALIA THEATRE

YET WEI smoke a pipe sometimes,
And then go to Thalia Theatre,
Not to see Chinese play,
But to hear the lonely music of Chinese orchestra,
Which sounds like hills, like the desert, like the plain,
Like stars, like moonlight, like summer sky and still river.
For then, he say, he sees coming out of the music
The moats of the Great Wall full of lotuses;
Then he sees green lands, and wind blown willows,
And the blossoming valleys of the Yangtse-kiang;
Then he sees the shaded grays of earth and sky
Tinged with blue and rose;
Then he sees the tomb of the Ming emperor,
Amid temples and palaces, and the carved figures
Of harnessed elephants and horses,
And snarling tigers and lions.
But when the dream is brightest, and the music sweetest,

Saddest, and from the farthest distances calling,
Yet Weit says he floats over the long way to Tibet,
To Turkestan, to India,
Where the Himalayas fill the air
With a dumbness that will not let their music speak;
Then he passes across the Gobi desert,
And the Great Plain, where demons lurk,
And wild winds cry
Vastness and solitude and eternal loneliness forever;
Then, says Yet Wei, he sinks into a deeper dream,
And tears run down his cheeks;
For he sees thousands of years stretched like caravans,
He sees thousands of years of patient Chinese
Taking the burdened camels to India and Persia.

NO ROOM IN THE INN

HARRY CHIN said that he did not believe
That there was no room in the inn
For Joseph and Mary when Jesus was born.
The hotel keeper just pretended that he had no room,
And sent Joseph and Mary to the stable.
What makes you say that? asked Yet Wei.
Because, said Harry Chin
Jehovah is revengeful,
And today the Jews have all the best hotels.
And the Gentiles are sleeping in the stables —
That is to pay up for Joseph and Mary.

COMING FROM HONG KONG

One time when Ben Koenegsberg
Was at Hip Lung's,
Hong King was telling about the time
He came from Hong Kong,
When he slept on the deck
With a discharged American soldier from the Philippines,
Who was sick; and with a negro,
Who was working his way back to America.
How was it? asked Ben Koenegsberg;
All right, said Hong King; we had a good time.
We looked up at the army officers all in uniform,
And the fine gentlemen and ladies showing off on the upper deck.
They looked down on us, and held their noses;
But they looked at each other proud and envious.
We were good friends, the soldier, the negro and me,
Said Hong King —
We laughed and talked and had a good time.

We could not envy each other;
We could laugh at the fine people, who envied
each other.

KU SHU TRIED FOR RAPE

Black Mag was standing in her doorway
When Sam Chung, Hop Lee, and some more passed,
Talking about Ku Shu, who was being tried for raping
Lucy Macarrio, a dish washer
At Chi Li-Chi's restaurant.
Go tell the judge, said Black Mag,
That you can't thread a moving needle.

KU SHU IN JAIL

While Ku Shu was in jail
Sun Wet and Wah Tom went to see him.
Ku Shu was sitting on a bench in his cell;
His face was in his hands.
When he looked up they saw he had been weeping.
Sun Wet said: You will be out, Ku Shu,
Do not weep.
Ku Shu said, I do not weep for being in jail,
I am not afraid.
Why do you weep then? asked Wah Tom.
Because, said Ku Shu,
There is a cricket in a crack of this cell.
Every time the cricket sings
I think of the cicadas,
And the brown hills around my father's home
By Jo-ya lake.

HIP LUNG ON WESTERN LITERATURE

Hip Lung read Chinese books,
But sometimes English and American.
One day he talk much with Chinese students from university
Who tell him about Shelley and Mill and Carlyle,
About Ruskin and Tolstoy and Ibsen,
About Dostoevsky and Voltaire and Rousseau,
And Zola and Renan and Stendhal—
All like that.
And when Hip Lung hear what they write
He say, These men hate world as it is;
They are mad, they want to kick over;
They act as if pigs had trampled their flower garden,
As if slop had been thrown upon them,
As if robbers had picked their pockets,
As if the whole world was a lie.
That's true, said a student.
Well, said Hip Lung, all too bad.
In a good world of truth and peace

These men would write songs of happiness,
They would not be urging men to fight,
To make world over.
All same it takes stronger men to sing than to scold.

FRUITFUL INACTION

Quong Wing had a father
In Philippine Islands
When McKinley prayed,
And God said to take all the islands
And bring them to Gesu Kliste;
And to do sent Hell Roaring Jake Smith,
Who said, Kill, burn, make Samar howl,
We want no prisoners.
One day missionary come again to see Quong Wing,
And ask him, What did your father teach you, Quong Wing
That make you so stubborn against God and Kliste?
And Quong Wing say:
My father teach me to build humble house
Beneath the pines;
He teach me to read Li Po
With hat off, not knowing
The season, but only morning and evening;
He teach me that if I am happy when lost in Nature,

And doing nothing, that I am success.
Then missionary say, No, you are your brother's keeper,
Work, for the night is coming.

THE PEACE CONFERENCE

Some one ask Yuan Chang
If he not glad about peace conference
And end of all war.
No, said Yuan Chang, that is nothing;
America, France, England and Japan
Have world divided as they want it,
And now want peace so not to disturb
How it is divided.
After while some one will want to divide over,
Then war again.

THE TWO NAPOLEONS

Yet Wei told Elmer Chubb
About Huang-ti, Chinese Napoleon,
Who conquer the kingdoms as fast
As worm gnaws mulberry leaf.
Elmer Chubb say that remind him of something:
He say that over the tomb
Of French Napoleon
Is a window with glass picture of Gesu Kliste;
And so Napoleon rests, conquered,
At the feet of the Prince of Peace.
What words are on the window?
Ask Yet Wei.
And Elmer Chubb did not know.
Well, say Yet Wei,
Gesu Kliste should say to Napoleon,
This is my beloved Son,
Because Gesu Kliste cause more war
Than Huang-ti, Napoleon or anybody.

HARRY CHIN AND BLACKBIRD

Harry Chin came running in
To store of Hip Lung,
And try to talk, pointing with finger
Out at Manhattan Bridge.
Sam Ching, Hong King, Quong Wing,
And Tun Lum all run out —
Hip Lung walk out.
And there way up on bridge was a blackbird
Singing like he was on a reed
By spring time water.
I am poor Gum Shan Ding, say Harry Chin;
But I shall never see Sand Hill City
In China, never again!

FULL MOON ON THE BOWERY

The same evening that Harry Chin see blackbird
He take long walk through Bowery,
And under elevated as far as Rivington,
Then back to Mulberry,
Then down Broadway to City Hall Square,
It was full moon;
The moon rolled the roofs of the hot tenements,
But it hung beside the nodding tower
Of the Woolworth building,
Where the blazing widows blinded the sky
Till the moon looked like a wilted Nelumbian
Lotus
In the hands of Hua Hsien,
The goddess of flowers, when she stands
By the shore of Hangchou.
Then Harry Chin stepping amid
The tangle of steel, and the rabble racket
Thought of the night wind over Hangchou
Which heaps the spun glass of the foam

Against the reeds with the sound of blown frost;
And where the naked moon bathes alone
With streaming hair.

CIVILIZATION

Two students from university,
Hang Tsiang and Elihu Chapin,
Come to store of Hip Lung,
And drink tea and talk
About America and China.
Elihu Chapin brag about railroads,
Tunnels, skyscrapers, banks, money, ships —
All like that, and say that is what civilization has done.
So Hang Tsiang say,
How much have they done for happiness,
For good feelings, for making fair man?
How much did they cheat, and hurt and kill people to build?
How much do they wreck nerves,
And starve and rob people to keep?
Well, say Hip Lung,
Without going out of doors I can know the whole world;

Without looking out the window I can see;
Without doing I can attain;
I wouldn't give my happy feelings for all skyscrapers.

CHINA'S MIND IN A TRAP

Elmer Chubb hear somewhere
About Ming emperors who make all China
Study nothing but Five Classics and Four Books,
And so imprison mind of China.
This he say to Hip Lung one day.
Hip Lung say to Elmer Chubb:
In America and all West
Gesu Kliste religion imprisons mind
To be serpent and dove;
But arms hand to carry Gesu Kliste with sword
To all the world.
China is imprisoned, but mind own business;
America try to get China in American jail.
So Elmer Chubb say:
Do you say that to bind feet of women is right?
Not so bad, say Hip Lung,
As to keep married women from going to University,
Or teaching school;
Or to keep Presbyterian minister
From preaching in Episcopal Church.

SHUN-LI AND PAT WRENN

Shun-Li and Salvation Army man
Come along and see Pat Wrenn
Great train robber and bandit in old days,
Sitting on steps of elevated in rain,
Hungry and in rags.
Policeman come along and take Pat Wrenn
To station for being a vagrant,
Where he tell judge that all his riches
Made from being bandit
Were taken away from him by stock market.
Then old Miss Alden come forward
And ask judge to let him go.
The judge let him go,
And Miss Alden give him money
To go home and die.

WING CHAN AND OLD MISS ALDEN

Old Miss Alden has millions of dollars,
And live all alone in old house
On Fifteenth Street
With rotting iron fence,
And closed shutters, broken and sagged.
No one ever see inside house.
But Wing Chan who work in laundry
See into Miss Alden's back window,
And see boxes, papers, clothes, everything
Piled in room around old bed;
And see Miss Alden light candle at night;
And many people see Miss Alden
Going along the street to lunch counter.
When Wing Chan tell Yuan Chang about her he say:
"She is good woman; she goes to police courts
"To help Pat Wrenn. She give money away
"To the young trying to get a start."

YUAN CHANG ON REFORM

Sun Wet go out west
To visit Chinese friends;
And come back and tell
Of great reform crusade,
And of governor indicted for old debt.
Yuan Chang say, "The state got back the money,
"And lost its reputation,
"Just like a woman getting damages
"For her virginity."

YET WEI ON CONTRIBUTIONS TO ART

Yuan Chang and Yet Wei
Were talking about rich man
Who gave millions to Art Museum
Made out of restaurant business.
And Yet Wei say that Poe
Gave more to art than rich man.
"How's that?" ask Yuan Chang.
"Because," say Yet Wei,
"Poe give all he had,
"Instead of using what he had to get money;
"While rich man use what he had to get money,
"And then give some of it to Art Museum.
"What you give," say Yet Wei,
"Must be measured by what you don't give."

Sun Wet try one day to make Wah Tom
Leave old trouble alone,
And not stir up.
"As soon as trouble is dry," say Sun Wet,
"Gnats will die;
"Then you can kick it all over lot."
"But who wants to kick that?" ask Wah Tom.
"Any one," say Sun Wet,
"Who don't want to be blinded by gnats."

MARS HILL AND CHINA

Yat King had taken his master's in Greek literature
and history;
He had studied theology and the history of
Christianity
At Princeton.
One day preachers were at Hip Lung's,
And all of them sang the praises of St. Paul,
Saying that he was greater than Plato or Æschylos.
One preacher told how St. Paul
Braved the learned men of Greece at Athens,
And stood upon Mars Hill,
And proclaimed the salvation of man
Through the death and resurrection of Jesus.
Never before, said the preacher,
Had anything of moment happened at Mars Hill
Until St. Paul thus baptized it with faith and fire.
Yat King said, Don't you remember that Apollo, the
god of song,
And Athena, the goddess of wisdom,

Freed Orestes at Mars Hill
From the Furies, the pangs of conscience,
And the tortures of useless regret?
The preacher knew nothing of this.
Then Yat King spoke in Chinese
To Hip Lung, Hi Ho and Wah Tom,
Telling them that the cave of the Furies
Was under Mars Hill.
So that's it, said Hip Lung;
St. Paul let the Furies out of the cave
When he was there;
That's it, he said again;
The Furies got over to China.

YUAN CHANG ON ENGLISH PROPAGANDA

When Yuan Chang hear about Chicago mayor
Who fight English and King George,
But only accuse and find no evidence of English
ruling America,
Just as in old time and always, he say,
"Fe Fi Fo Fum,"
And just smoke.

TAMMANY AND TRUSTS

Reformer come to Yet Wei
And talk about Tammany and democrats,
And New York.
Yet Wei say,
"Well, how about trusts and republicans,
"And Washington?
"Washington is tariff,
"New York is poker —
"One big thief,
"One little thief —
"Both thieves."

GREAT AUDIENCES AND GREAT POETS

Two Chinese students
From University of Chicago,
Go with Yet Wei to see Yuan Chang,
And have much talk about war,
Confucius and at last Li Po.
One Chinese student speak of Walt Whitman and
America,
And say to have great poets
There must be great audiences too.
Other Chinese student say:
"To have great audiences
"There must be fewer poets."

YUAN CHANG ON CENSORSHIP

WHEN Yuan Chang hear of laws in America
To stop teaching of science,
About Darwin, and all like that,
He tell of Shau-Kung,
Great Chinese duke
Who advise Li-wang,
Bad emperor in China,
Long ago.
Li-wang was very happy
Because he made law to stop people talking,
About him or bad times.
So Shau-Kung say to emperor: "You have made
screen
"Which keep you from seeing what people think;
"They think even when they do not talk.
"But it is more dangerous to shut people's mouths
"Than to stop a river.
"When river is stopped it overflows and destroys;
"Let river flow in bed, and all will be well."

So Yuan Chang say, "Shau-Kung
"Who live eight hundred year before Gesu Kliste
"Was wiser man than Gesu Kliste.
"Gesu Kliste say he judges everybody,
"But nobody can judge him.
"Shau-Kung say let everybody judge and speak."

SUN WET AND PHILIPPINES

Soldier show Sun Wet
Picture of American ruler of Philippines,
With hard jaws, great eyes, and beaked nose.
Sun Wet say, "Yes, just like picture of vulture
"On Chinese screen."
By this time Sun Wet had left Christian church,
And fountains filled with blood,
And come back to Chinese belief
That the ruler ruins himself,
And the conqueror loses.

YUAN CHANG ON AMERICANISM

One day Yuan Chang sat and listened
To Americans and Chinese
Who talk about America.
Yuan Chang say, "There will never be America
"Like you say, China,
"Until man come who make America
"Out of such different peoples;
"And until such different peoples
"Follow that man."
"How about Gesu Kliste?" ask a Salvation Army man.
"What Gesu Kliste?" ask Yuan Chang.
"Every church has a different Gesu Kliste;
"Every race has a different Gesu Kliste.
"Orchestra cannot follow two conductors
"And keep in tune."

YET WEI AND IRISHMAN

IRISHMAN talking one day to Yet Wei
Tell Yet Wei he now father of eight children,
And that he name last child "Home Edition."
Yet Wei tell Irishman about Confucius
Who name his first child "The First Fish,"
Meaning he would catch more.
But when Yet Wei tell Irishman
That when Confucius was born
His father was seventy years old,
Irishman say, "Confucius was not named right,
"Best name for him was 'Sporting Extra.' "

SALVATION ARMY AND TURKEYS

Last Christmas
When Salvation Army stand on corner
And take collection for turkeys,
Yuan Chang see this and laugh.
He come back to store
And talk about it to Yet Wei,
Wah Tom and Americans.
"Giving turkeys!" say Yuan Chang;
"You can make yourself do that.
"But real goodness is the whole man;
"It is wisdom and growing —
"You cannot make."

WAH TOM AND PROSTITUTES

Wah Tom tell one day about Chinese prostitutes,
All with pale face,
And quivering jewels,
And colored silks,
And lust rich and dark like fine opium;
And how their lovers never see flesh,
And never hold flesh,
But put arms around clouds of silks
Like enfolding thousands of butterflies.
Wah Tom say: "I am tired of naked flappers,
"I go back to China for old joy."

KUAN YIN

Chinaman named Kuan Yin
Loved Yuan Chang very much.
Kuan Yin disappear,
And everyone think is dead.
By and by he come back,
And Yuan Chang say:
"I thought you were dead, Kuan Yin."
And Kuan Yin say:
"So long as you are alive, Yuan Chang,
"How should I presume to die?"
Just like Yen say to Confucius
Thousands of years ago.
Nothing new happens,
No new word is said.

YUAN CHANG ask Yet Wei
Why he shed no more tears.
Yet Wei say:
"Saving tears for urine."

YET WEI tell Yuan Chang
About Gow Hang, who is shunned
And hated, but no one do anything to.
Yet Wei ask reason why no one kill Gow Hang,
Or have him in jail.
Yuan Chang say: "Gow Hang has done wrongs
"Which no one can tell about
"Without being hurt.
"You can't tell on smuggler
"When you had part of goods.
"You can't move dung away
"Without making smell."

HI HO WINS A BET

Hi Ho bet Wah Tom a jade bottle
That he could prove that Gesu Kliste
Was not Jew.
"How's that?" ask Wah Tom.
Hi Ho say: "Who was father? God was father.
"Who was mother? Virgin was mother.
"Where any Jew blood?"

CHINESE PICTURES

YUAN CHANG tell picture buyer
That Chinese landscapes are the best.
Picture buyer ask why.
Yuan Chang say: "Because everything is alive
"In Chinese landscapes,
"And tell about life:
"Fields tell of workers;
"Woods show woodmen or dreamers,
"Who have left world
"To have monkeys for pets.
"Cranes fly, and show love of water and land.
"Nature hates city,
"And Chinese artist shows why."

YUAN CHANG AND PREACHER

Preacher come one day to Yuan Chang
And ask him why he have no church,
No preacher, no heaven, no hell,
No prayer, no God.
Yuan Chang say: "Church is the world,
"Preacher is father of family;
"Life has heaven and hell;
"Every day is a prayer;
"People are God.
"Unhappiness follows evil, and no god can stop;
"In all the world all men are brothers;
"And do not do to any one
"What you would not have them do to you."
Preacher say to Yuan Chang:
"You are a heathen, Yuan Chang."
Yuan Chang say to preacher:
"That's what I think of you."

YET WEI AND POET

One day American poet tell Yet Wei
Of great English poet Keats
Who could feel the flowers grow above him
Before he died.
Yet Wei smoke and then say:
"I know about Chinese poet who say
"He cannot sleep, even at midnight
"When the water clock has stopped,
"But must watch
"The trembling shadows of spring flowers
"Thrown by the moon on the window blinds."

HI HO AND LEARNED MAN

Hi Ho is head waiter at Golden Dragon,
And lead people to seats —
Very polite.
But Hi Ho eat in kitchen,
After all guests are gone.
So I see picture in paper of learned man
Leading procession to Hall of Fame,
Where veils are taken from busts:
Learned man will eat in kitchen too,
Like Hi Ho.

HUANG-TI ON CATTLE

Meadow like jade, cattle like coral;
Mountains like raven, porcelain clouds.
Cattle black lacquer, cattle white blossoms,
Onion green meadow, black bat trees.
Mountains a wine pot set on green tray,
Stretching shadows like dragon claws.
Cattle in the meadow green as snake skin,
Sea gray, sky blue, writhed by the wind.
Spring sun shining, snow half melted,
Clear like ice and thick like frost:
Rock crystal plaques on purple velvet,
Snows on the mountains in the spring.
Cattle in the meadows still as figures
Painted on a wine pot of throbbing blue.
Cattle in the meadows — too bad to sell them
To buy more cattle and get more gold.
For now is spring — singing under the plum tree,
And bamboo pipes by the river's shore.
I wouldn't sell the cattle, nor see the autumn,
Nor the mustard yellow of stricken grass!

HI HO AND NAN-TZÏ

Hi Ho had read of Pau-ssï, who ruined the emperor
Yu Wang
With her amorous whims, making him tear up precious pieces of silk
Because the tearing of silk pleased her ears —
Even then she would not smile.
Then one day she maddened him with kisses,
And got him to light the beacon fires
Which were only to be lighted to summon the princes
To defend the emperor against the Huns.
But later when the Huns did come, and the fires were lighted,
The princes once fooled did not respond, and the emperor was destroyed.
Then Pau-ssï smiled, then Pau-ssï laughed.
Hi Ho had read all this, and when he met Nan-tzï,
Called also Lily, and the Most Whimsical of Ladies,
He knew she was Pau-ssï over again, and planned to revenge Yu Wang.

So he danced to her hussy-music, but danced
Backing Nan-tzï, who saw not where she was dancing.
He tore up letters, old love letters, instead of silk;
And when she talked and talked of Hi Ho's foolish
love,
And how he followed her everywhere, he followed the
more
To confirm the gossip that she was his: so lighting
The beacon fires for other roués to see.
Nan-tzï was danced to a corner at last, in love, being
long in lust.
Then Hi Ho fed her a bowl of onions disguised,
And when the stomach of Nan-tzï growled it humbled
her,
As Hi Ho looked and smiled a bright disdain.
Then Hi Ho played at whims himself;
Then Hi Ho disappeared!

PO FU AND HI-TSUNG

Po Fu go around all time
Drink, eat, laugh, play flute,
Good natured all the time.
Hi-tsung very busy making money,
Mad all the time, hate everybody.
Chinese and American all the same —
Wine and money same everywhere.

YANG CHUNG ON GOD

METHODIST preacher come to Yang Chung
And say Jews discover God.
"When?" ask Yang Chung.
Methodist preacher say: "Tree tousand
"Five hundred years ago;
"What do you say to that?"
Yang Chung smoke, then say: "Not much.
"Chinese discover God long before Jews,
"Tousand years before Jews."
"The same God?" ask Methodist preacher.
"Must be same," say Yang Chung, "only one!"

MYSTICISM

A PHILOSOPHY that concerns itself
With what is not known;
Whose priests become great
In proportion to what they do not know;
And who preach the wonder of what is not known,
And measure their own wisdom, and the richness of
the religion
By the boundaries of mystery,
That is mysticism, that is the mystic,
Said Yet Wei.
All the while the much that can be known
Of human justice, manners, science, art,
Stands neglected.

PICTURES AND WOMEN

Elmer Chubb talked to Wah Tom,
Yet Wei, Yuan Chang and Hip Lung
About the evil of concubines,
Saying that China had sinned,
And had paid for the sin all along
In poverty, plagues and revolutions and wars.
What can you say, Elmer Chubb asked,
In defense of concubines?
Well, said Wah Tom, women are the same as pictures,
If you love pictures you want more than one;
If you love women you want more than one.
Want? frowned Elmer Chubb,
But should you have them?
Hip Lung spoke up, Who speaks the wise word,
The word to be obeyed, you or Nature?

SHUN-LI ON AMERICA

Shun-Li, Chinese friend,
Talk last night about America,
And all people in America
From Europe and Asia;
And about one hundred per cent and Ku-Klux.
Shun-Li say: "Must be picture first,
"Then good hand, then sharp knife" —
Then he smoke and say nothin'.
Then he say: "Rotten wood can't be carved."

ELMER CHUBB AND YANG CHUNG

Elmer Chubb come from Camden, New Jersey,
To New York Christmas time,
And go to see Yang Chung with Sun Wet,
Who believe now in Gesu Kliste.
Elmer Chubb tell Yang Chung about churches in Camden, and no saloons,
And no bad houses,
And about business and great talking machine factory in Camden
Covering acres and acres of ground.
Yang Chung smoke and then say:
"Walt Whitman live in Camden, yes?"
"I don't know," say Elmer Chubb.
Then Yang Chung smoke and say nothin' more!

Sun Wet go to Rescue Hall,
And find Gesu Kliste, and is baptized.
Then sing, Onward, Christian Soldiers;
And sing about the Son of God going to war,
And about his blood-red banner;
And about fountains filled with blood.
Too much blood!
So I say to Sun Wet: Come back to the red-rose lotus
Fed by the sweet jade-white roots under the mud.
Come back to the red-rose lotus
That lifts the soul from earth to paradise.
Come back to the prayers written on silk,
And burned in vases of gilt;
And to incense and the sacrifice of flowers.
Come back to the altars of heaven amid the hills,
And to the temples of prayer for the year.
Come back to the Buddha of boundless age and light!

YET WEI AND YANG CHUNG

YET WEI ask Yang Chung what he think
Of great writer, great because he means great,
But has no great words.
"Like Ho-Shin the wrestler," say Yang Chung,
"Who try very hard, but is thrown.
"Little strong men try;
"Big strong men do.
"Little strong men say 'I mean to';
"Big strong men say, 'I do' and do.
" 'Mean to' just excuse for not having strength.
"What good for goose to say, 'I try to sing?' "
Yet Wei answer: "How is jade polished, Yang Chung?"
"With the powder of ground rubies," say Yang Chung.
"Maybe Ho-Shin is ground ruby," say Yet Wei.
"Ground," say Yang Chung, "I don't know about ruby."

Hi Ho left Golden Dragon
And went to work in an oyster room
Down near Wall Street,
Where bank clerks come for oysters.
When Hi Ho hear that Black Mag
Who married Wah Tom
Had left him and taken furniture
And all the money, he say:
"What of it? Oyster work like hell
"To make shell for home,
"And make pearl for picture in home;
"Then what happens?
"Shell is thrown away, pearl is grabbed,
"And bank clerk swallow oyster."

REPUBLICAN PARTY AND TURTLE SHELL

Someone tell Hip Lung
About old Whig party in America
Which was so hated and distrusted
That it took the name republican,
And thus hidden became successful,
And feared and powerful,
As it crawled to the flag pole of Liberty,
And coiled about it and kept everyone away.
That is like Chinese story, said Hip Lung:
A snake which had been almost killed by a farmer
Got away, and crawled into the abandoned shell
Of a dead turtle.
Being thus concealed it returned, turtle shell and all,
To where the farmer was plowing,
And bit him to death.

YEE LEM OF KEOKUK

After Yee Lem of Keokuk
Had been in New York long time
Yet Wei ask him if city and East
Are not much different from country and West.
"Yes," say Yee Lem, "different
"Like head and tail of donkey different:
"One is head, one tail,
"Both donkey."

CONVERSATION AT FAN HUNG'S ON KILLING

Down at tea store of Fan Hung
They talk about Tun Lum
Who going to walk to chair
For killing partner,
When partner had cheated and ruined him.
Harry Chin say everything know how to kill:
The oyster know how to kill;
The snake know how to kill;
The eagle and the wren know how to kill;
The tiger and lion know how to kill.
And oyster, snake, eagle, wren,
Tiger and lion know what death is,
And when a thing is dead,
And for why they make it dead —
So does a man.
And why? ask Harry Chin;
Why, if so bad?

HIP LUNG ON FREE SPEECH

When Harry Chin tell Hip Lung
About jailing strikers,
And breaking up meetings in hall,
Hip Lung smoke and then say:
Like one time on Clark street
When Carrie Fay and Clabbie Burns
Rob a farmer with lots of money:
Farmer yell and make big noise,
And call for police;
Police come and take farmer to jail
For disturbing peace.

AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Shun-Li take Yet Wei to public library,
Where they see books with bindings off, being
repaired,
And crumbling leaves being patched.
What's the use, say Yet Wei:
If leaves are crumbling thoughts are crumbling,
And who can patch thoughts?

SUN WET ON CHINESE REVOLUTION

Sun Wet told Hi Ho
That he knew things about Chinese revolution,
And would not tell.
Why not? say Hi Ho.
Because, say Sun Wet,
I could no more sit here and laugh,
Seeing people talk, brag, and be sure,
And all time know nothing,
And all time telling lies,
And all time saying they know truth about so and so.
People have more fun with lie than with truth.

ORIGIN OF SIN

Wah Tom say he know all about sin,
And Puritan, and being good in America.
How you mean? ask Hi Ho.
Well, say Wah Tom,
God put sex nerve in lips just for kiss,
Nothing else;
Along come devil and moved nerve
To wrong place:
And that make shame, sin, Puritan,
Prohibitionist, law and order man —
All troubles.

YET WEI A REAL CHRISTIAN

YET WEI hear Wah Tom tell
About origin of sin — but say nothing.
Week after he come to Wah Tom and say:
Suppose devil did move nerve,
That is all good;
That gives soul chance to rise, forget,
To think of nothing but heart against heart,
To be pure in spite of devil.
Wah Tom look at Yet Wei,
Then he say:
That is being Christian, Yet Wei;
You are real Christian —
No need to baptize.

HIP LUNG WITH PHOTOGRAVURE PAGE

In China you see picture of immortals worshipping
God of longevity;
Or war man being served with rice;
Or man and woman under willow tree;
Or historian writing book;
Or Tangut horseman;
Or musicians playing in palace court;
Or women boiling cocoons.
Here every Sunday I see picture of same man,
Proud, swelled out, solemn,
Pinning Red Cross button on senator,
Or president.

HIP LUNG'S DREAM

Hip Lung tell many times
Of a night on the river,
When the moon hung like an oval mirror
Over a high yellow dune;
And the black and silver water
Flowed without a sound by the dune's shore,
While the rushes whispered to the wind of the sea.
One day Hip Lung awoke
After long day sleep from wine.
For long time he sat and stared.
What is the matter? asked Yet Wei.
Hip Lung say:
I had dream of dune and mirror moon.

SAM YUNG AND WANG-CHAO

Sam Yung called his beloved
Lady Wang-Chao,
Because he never knew her loveliness
Until he had lost her.
She was like the Lady Wang-Chao,
The concubine of the emperor,
Who had so many concubines
That he had their portraits painted,
And hung in a hall, where he could walk
And choose one quickly.
All bribed the artist to paint them as beautiful,
All but the Lady Wang-Chao,
Who was represented with an ugly face,
She who was loveliest of all.
When a Tartar chieftain came,
The emperor looking at the pictures
Chose Wang-Chao to be the delight
Of the Tartar chieftain for the night.
The Tartar chieftain loved the beauty of Wang-Chao,

And took her to the barbarian land,
Where she died, and was buried in the desert.
The emperor discovering his mistake
Mourned the Lady Wang-Chao for life.
Now Sam Yung grieves for his Wang-Chao;
He looks up at the under curve of the sky,
And laments that it does not cover him and
Wang-Chao,
As the bluebird's wing covers the breast of the mate;
He cries that the sky severs him from the Lady
Wang-Chao.

HIP LUNG ON THE PERFECT MAN

Elmer Chubb tell Hip Lung that Gesu Kliste
Was the perfect man;
And Hip Lung say, no.
Why? ask Elmer Chubb.
Because, say Hip Lung,
While Gesu Kliste was quick to understand,
And a little clear to see,
He had small knowledge,
And did not always tell the truth;
Nor was he fitted to rule;
Nor was he of far-reaching intelligence;
Nor was he always benign and mild;
Nor was he always forbearing;
Nor was he always firm and enduring;
Nor was he self-adjusted,
Nor did he always know himself;
Nor did he adhere to the Mean;
Nor was he accomplished or learned;
Nor did he discriminate wisely;

Nor did he always practice or preach justice;
Nor did he respect the fitness of manners;
Nor did he retain equanimity,
Nor the self-command of the sage to the end,
Nor the sanity of the philosopher to the end.
Confucius said to his disciples,
"I conceal nothing from you.
"There is nothing that is not shown to you."
Gesu Kliste hid his doctrines,
And so bred cruel mysteries to this day.
But the laws of life have done their work:
Gesu Kliste did not last a century;
Confucius has lasted twenty-five centuries.

To RETURN good for evil;
To be a dove with doves,
And not a serpent with serpents;
To teach social duties, and accomplished manners,
And the golden rule,
And that all men are brothers.
To love Something which is all pervading,
Still, formless, unchanging, nameless,
Like a mother, like a father, sustaining everything,
Not belonging to the realm of death,
Not jealous, not revengeful, not partial,
Not excluding the foreign uncircumcised in flesh,
And uncircumcised in heart;
Not closing the sanctuary to all but a chosen breed.
Not to waste the heart to outward decay,
But to make the inner life full,
And to gain the center of Being.
To carry the lotus flower through boundless space;
To make the heart a clear pool

Which mirrors Nature;
To become a pine tree, a mountain, a river;
To ride moonbeams;
To adore the sun and to become a flame —
This is Chinese religion.

THE NORTH

Down at Hop Lee's
They wrote poems about the West,
The East, the South,
The North.
Harry Chin's poem was about the North:
The North is the master of the world,
He wrote.
From the North came the conquerors
Who made China strong;
From the North came the Hittites
Who took Asia Minor;
From the North came the Goths
Who overthrew Rome.
The North subdued the South in the Civil War;
Peking triumphed over Canton,
Chicago over New Orleans;
And in all the cities the north sides
Gather the wealth and the splendor.

SAVIOURS OF THE PEOPLE

American tells Hip Lung about Bryan and Roosevelt
Who travel eighteen thousand miles,
Who travel twenty thousand miles
Over America, making speeches,
And how wonderful it was.
Hip Lung say:
What American has traveled from state to state
Teaching the noble life?
American say, Why, Roosevelt.
Then Hip Lung say nothing,
Just look straight ahead, and smoke.

CHINA DISCOVERED AMERICA

VERY smart American tell Yuan Chang
That Columbus carrying salvation to Indians
Discovered America.
No, said Yuan Chang,
China made paper,
And so there were books about wonder and wealth
Of Kublai Khan — and travel commenced;
China invented compass,
And so Columbus could steer his ships.
Oh, said Yuan Chang,
If only wise books had been printed;
If only ships had steered with the wisdom of
Confucius.

HOP LEE AND BUTTERFLY

Hop Lee after he smoke pipe
Often talk of Tao.
One time he sat for long minutes
Looking at screen.
He was dreaming that he saw a butterfly.
Afterwards he said
He didn't know whether the butterfly
Had once been himself,
When it dreamed it was a butterfly;
Or whether it was a butterfly
Dreaming that it was Hop Lee.
I was very happy, said Hop Lee.

DRIED CATERPILLARS AND SNAILS

One day some people came into store
Of Hip Lung, laughing and talking.
Hip Lung sat with Harry Chin,
And Lee Hop, and watched them.
The people were looking at dried birds' nests,
And dried caterpillars.
Look, they said, Chinese eat these.
Harry Chin spoke in Chinese:
Yes, and Americans eat tripe and snails,
Kidneys, brains and guts.
Hip Lung spoke up:
John the Baptist
Lived on grasshoppers.

STRANGE CHINAMAN

From place to place around Mott street
Wanders a strange Chinaman;
Some say his name is Sung Chung.
He is an aging man now,
And his talk is much of the old times.
He says that in the days of his strength
When he loved loneliness
He wrote poems and carved jade.
Then growing older he feared solitude,
And so took a wife.
Now, he says, he has a companion
Who interrupts him with a thousand words,
And takes from him the time
For verses and jade.

LUH SHAN

MAN in China named Luh Shan,
Who as old man make porcelain vases.
He was so old that no friends lived
To whom he could talk about his vases,
And get praise for his vases,
As friends will praise.
The people he knew and who knew him
Saw that his vases were worthless.
Yet Wei tell this to Yuan Chang, who say,
"Every man come to time of life
"When there is no one to tell it to."

CHARLEY LEE

CHARLEY LEE is same as American,
And read all American books.
One day Yuan Chang ask Charley Lee
About American books.
"All right," say Charley Lee;
"But America needs a Huang-ti,
"Who was Napoleon of China,
"And burned all books of critics,
"And all like that.
"Critics are not silk worms,
"Critics are worms who eat leaves,
"But make no silk."
Hip Lung said, "Just burn all the Bibles,
"Burn every Bible in the world,
"And critics, business men, hypocrites and soldiers
"Will fall down like cut weeds."

TUCK HIGH DREAMED OF HIS UNCLE

Tuck High dreamed of uncle in China,
Dreamed of the days of their youth together:
How they fished in the little river;
How they hunted through marshes and meads;
How they wandered the midnight woodlands
To the hut of the hermit who played the lute;
How they counted the stars through the tree tops,
How they followed the sinking moon;
How they flew their kites in summer
High as the crows flew over the hills;
How once together they faced the wolf;
How once they found the nest of the eagle.
Where is China, when at last your windows
Stare towering walls, or the tangle of tracks?
China is West, far West in the quiet
Of the Purple Hills. And looking thither
Tuck High often stood by the ferries,
And gazed at the palisades under the moon.

HIP LUNG

When Hip Lung wanted to own the earth
He smoked the opium pipe and curled up in dreams
Behind his screen of tortoise shell.
But coming out of the dream he would sit for hours
On his chest of inlaid pearl saying nothing;
Or if anyone entered he said, How is business?
As China he was a happy man;
As America a worried man,
And America killed him at last
When they took him to court on a debt.

PLANNING AND NOT PLANNING

Between planning and not planning
How can I choose? And which is best?
When I am planning vision is brightest,
All seems fair and easy to do.
Flame of the mind burns then so brightly
Every step of the way is clear;
But soul droops down, the flame burns lower,
The moment changes and plan won't fit.
Yet if I sit and plan no labor,
Plan no pleasure, plan no life,
Hours drift by, and say, We're ready,
We would have speeded you had you planned.
Between the soul and Time the river
Always the Fate that prospers neither:
If my boat is ready the tide's against me,
If the tide is favorable, there's no boat.
Seeing that man can never marry
Dreams, or foresight, or labor with Fate
No wonder Lao-tze, the never striving,
The calm, indifferent, wins the heart.

YET WEI AND HIP LUNG

In his last days Hip Lung was very poor,
And had nothing but a little store,
And no business.
His wife was dead,
His friends were dead,
Or broken like himself.
His power was all gone,
For he was no longer king of Chinatown.
Yet Wei went to comfort Hip Lung,
And found him sitting on his old chest,
All alone, but with a kind of happiness
Slumbering in his eyes.
"You do not look sad," said Yet Wei.
And Hip Lung look at him and say:
"Blessed be nothing."

HIP LUNG ON OLD AGE

Hip Lung say that old age
Is being a child again,
With nothing to do, just like a child;
But different from child,
Because old man knows
That he has nothing to do,
And so think, and that is hard.

HIP LUNG'S PHOENIX

A LITTLE while before his death
Hip Lung told some friends of the dream
Which had followed him at intervals for life,
Appearing strangely again from time to time
After it seemed to have gone away for good.
It is the dream of the phoenix, said Hip Lung;
And always it is the same phoenix,
In the same wild, contemptuous mood;
It is always the same phoenix flirting and clashing together
His steel-blue tail feathers,
Which swish with the sound of thin strips of steel
As he cries forth valorously and satirically,
While strutting away from me, half looking back,
Amid the ribald cackles of his triumphant throat.
Well, said Yet Wei, this may be the same phoenix
Which came to Confucius,
And which ceasing to come, ended the fortunes of Confucius.

Yes, said Hip Lung,
But my fortunes are ended,
And if my phoenix comes no more,
It means my life nears its end.

WISHING FOR A BEAUTIFUL DEATH

When his friends could see
That Hip Lung would soon die,
They began to hope for a good death for him,
A death that would be beautiful.
Yet Wei's mother met her death in China
By falling into a stream
While gathering flowers.
In the Bowery there were no flowers.
But if Hip Lung could dream
Of the yellow dune and the moon-lit river,
And then die as he dreamed,
That would be a beautiful death.
Yet Wei hoped for this,
They all hoped for it.

THE DEATH OF HIP LUNG

On the day of his death Hip Lung arose,
And dressed himself, and entered his store.
He took a jade Buddha, and set it before him;
He lighted incense, and opened his chest.
He chose from his treasures a vase of nephrite,
Feasting his eyes on the artist's work.
With voluptuous calmness he ran his fingers
Over the carvings of leaves and flowers.
Yet Wei had watched him through the window,
Then went his way, and then returned:
There sat Hip Lung with the vase of nephrite
Folded about with his cold dead hands.

THE DEPARTURE OF YET WEI

A FEW days after Hip Lung died
Yet Wei prepared to go away.
To all who asked him where he was going
He answered that he did not know.
"I shall cross the ferry to Jersey City," he said,
"And climb to the highest hill there,
"In order to look for the last upon the towers of New
York —
"After that I shall wander."
And when he was ready to go,
Tuck High, Yuan Chang, Hi Ho,
And some others went with Yet Wei to the ferry.
Yet Wei got on the ferry weeping,
And all his friends wept.
Then Yet Wei gave a poem to Yuan Chang
To be read when they got back to Mott street.
The capstans rattled, the chains clanked,
And with a whistle the ferry started.
Yet Wei gave one look and disappeared.
His friends watched the ferry
Till it was lost in the mists of the Hudson.

YET WEI'S POEM

I WENT to his room, I saw his chest;
I took out his vase, I looked at it long;
I looked at the bronze jar with his ashes;
On a shelf was his pipe, on a stand his hat —
Everything said, Hip Lung is gone.
Where shall I wander? There is no searching
Ever shall find him, yet wander I must.
Trains roar and rattle, the peddlers are calling,
The children are playing, the merchants talk.
Between the high buildings a strip of heaven
So empty, so blue, is a dragon's mouth
That gnaws at my heart, and draws its life out,
While Something calls me, on high, far away.
This is the city of stone and iron
Whose pavements are vampire bones petrified,
Sapping the life of the children of labor,
And giving nothing of life in return.
The Sun-Set Land of The Purple Hills
Calls me now, and I wander forth
With an empty heart once full and happy
For the love of Hip Lung, forever gone.

THE END

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